

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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SUBJECT: IMPLICATIONS OF BEGIN GOVERNMENT FOR ISRAELI RELATIONS
WITH BRITAIN, GERMANY AND SOUTH AFRICA

REF: LONDON 8424 (NOTAL)

1. A POSSIBLE RESULT OF THE ACCESSION TO POWER OF A
GOVERNMENT HEADED BY LIKUD LEADER MENACHEM BEGIN MAY
BE A CHANGE IN RELATIONS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND CERTAIN
THIRD COUNTRIES. ONE OF THE COUNTRIES MOST LIKELY TO
BE AFFECTED WILL BE THR FRG. WHILE LEADER OF THE
OPPOSITION, BEGIN OPPOSED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLO-
MATIC RELATIONS WITH THE FRG AND HE CONSISTENTLY REFUSED
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TO MEET THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR OR PARTICIPATE IN ANY
GERMAN EMBASSY FUNCTIONS. WITH A PREWAR POLISH
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION, HE CAN SPEAK FLUENT GERMAN,
BUT REFUSES TO USE THE LANGUAGE.

2. LABOR PARTY SOURCES HAVE TOLD US THAT A GERMAN
TRADE UNION DELEGATION NOW VISITING ISRAEL HAS EX-

PRESSED CONCERN OVER THE FUTURE OF GERMAN-ISRAELI RELATIONS IN VIEW OF BEGIN'S KNOWN PERSONAL ANIMOSITY TOWARD GERMANY AND THE GERMAN PEOPLE. THEY CONSIDERED A RECENT HARDLINE LIKUD DECLARATION THAT IT WOULD NOT ACCEPT ANY FINAL REPARATIONS AGREEMENT WITH GERMANY TO BE AN INDICATION OF HOW ISRAELI INTRANSIGENCE UNDER BEGIN COULD REVERSE THE RELATIONSHIP WHICH HAD DEVELOPED BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES OVER THE PAST TEN YEARS. WE ASKED A LIKUD SOURCE (BEN-ELISSAR, THE PARTY SPOKESMAN) IF BEGIN AS PRIME MINISTER COULD BE EXPECTED TO MODIFY HIS STANCE; WOULD HE, FOR EXAMPLE, AGREE TO SEE THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR AND MEET HIGH RANKING GERMAN VISITORS? THE REPLY WAS A CAUTIOUS "WELL, I SUPPOSE SO."

3. CONCERN IS ALSO REFLECTED IN THE ISRAELI PRESS OVER THE ILL FEELING TOWARD BEGIN STILL PREVALENT IN THE U.K. THE ANIMOSITY COULD BECOME A SERIOUS BURDEN IN BRITISH-ISRAELI RELATIONS, IN ADDITION TO THE INEVITABLE CONFLICT OVER THE TERRITORIAL ISSUE. THE BRITISH ARE REPORTED TO SEE THEIR FEARS OF FUTURE STRAINED RELATIONS REINFORCED BY BEGIN'S TAKING THE LONDON TIMES TO TASK FOR CHARACTERIZING THE ISRAELI ELECTION RESULT AS "MADNESS" AND BY HIS DEFENDING HIS PAST AS GUERRILLA LEADER AGAINST THE BRITISH. BEGIN'S VIEWS OF BRITAIN ARE ALSO SAID TO BE COLORED BY THE FACT THAT AS RECENTLY AS 1972 HE EXPERIENCED VISA TROUBLES BECAUSE OF HIS IRGUN PAST WHILE TRAVELING TO THE U.K. ACCORDING TO BEN-ELISSAR, BEGIN HAS THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TRADITIONAL POLICS AFFINITY TOWARD FRANCE AND WILL SEEK TO IMPROVE ISRAEL/FRENCH RELATIONS. HE SAID THAT, IN GENERAL, BEGIN'S GOVERNMENT WILL SEEK TO MAINTAIN AND DEVELOP ISRAEL'S EUROPEAN TIES.

4. A FACTOR WHICH COULD PROTENTIAALLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE WIDENING OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A BEGIN GOVERNMENT AND THE WEST MAY BE FUTURE ISRAELI RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA. ACCORDING TO MFA ASSISTANT DIRECTOR GENERAL ANUG, PROSPECTIVE DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN HAD ALREADY INDICATED IN RECENT INTERVIEWS WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS THAT HE LOOKED FOR CLOSER RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. ANUG POINTED OUT THAT SINCE THE VORSTER VISIT TO ISRAEL LAST YEAR THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAD HANDLED ITS RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA WITH INCREASING CAUTION IN DEFERENCE TO WESTER, AND ESPECIALLY U.S., SENSITIVITIES. THUS FOR INSTANCE, THE ISRAELI-SOUTH AFRICAN INTERMINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AND

SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION CREATED AT THE TIME OF THE
VORSTER VISIT HAS NEVER MET. HE DESCRIBED A RECENT
SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE
TWO COUNTRIES AS OF ROUTINE SIGNIFICANCE, PERTAINING
PRINCIPALLY TO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH. HE ADMITTED,
HOWEVER, THE IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO PREDICT THE
FUTURE OF ISRAELI-SOUTH AFRICAN RELATIONS UNDER A
LIKUD GOVERNMENT. (BEN-ELISSAR HAD SAID THAT BEGIN WOULD MOVE
VERY CAUTIOUSLY IN DEVELOPING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO
GOVERNMENTS.)
LEWIS

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